

But my favourite Mindy story is from Zaranik in north Sinai, one spring in the late 1990s. We were birding by the pumping plant, an ugly concrete building with a leaking tap and small garden that provided sufficient water for a relatively luxuriant tree and precious sustenance for migrant birds. We had a wonderful afternoon's birding with, for me, two 'life' species. And then in and out of the tree's foliage I saw a sparrow different from the swarms of chirping House Sparrows *Passer domesticus*, white-cheeked and chestnut-capped, it was a Tree Sparrow *P. montanus*, but Mindy was rightly sceptical. It was, she told me, only the third record for Egypt. Eventually, with the light getting low, we left. Early the following morning, with Sherif, we staked out the pumping station once more, but nothing except for House Sparrows and other expected species showed themselves. And then came a huge shout, "Look! Richard's Tree Pipit!" What made it memorable was the utter confusion of the announcement, a confusion that summarised the excitement, and despite the confusion of linguistic euphoria it was the indeed a Tree Sparrow, not a Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, that was finally showing itself.

In recent years Mindy embraced social media and became a tireless campaigner for a several causes, not least her campaign against the Porto Faiyoum Hotel project on the northern shores of Lake Qaroun in Egypt's Faiyoum—a Protected Area. As things stand, it seems to be a final victory for her tireless campaigning and advocacy. A pristine northern lakeshore in years to come would be a fitting tribute. She was also instrumental in setting up Nature Conservation Egypt (NCE).

I have spoken earlier of the extraordinary bond between Mindy and her husband Sherif. That bond ensures her name continues. While Sherif's reputation was assured by his field skills as an ornithologist, he has made a profession from herpetology and has ensured that her name lives on through two new gecko species, *Tarentola mindiae* from Egypt's Western Desert and *Hemidactylus mindiae* from south Sinai.

Mindy died after suffering a stroke on 14 March. She is survived by her husband Sherif and by their two daughters Laila and Yasmine.

Richard Hoath

Georges Oueda 1964–2012

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On 10 December 2012, after suffering a cerebral stroke, Georges Oueda passed away, aged only 48. Georges was the Director of Conservation and the Important Bird Areas (IBA) Coordinator of Fondation Amis de la Nature NATURAMA, the BirdLife partner in Burkina Faso. Georges was the single most knowledgeable expert in ornithology in his country, and known to many across the international bird conservation community.

He was born on 27 August 1964 in Peotenga, Kourittenga province of Burkina Faso. In 1982, he attended the teachers college at Tenkodogo, and then completed secondary level education at Newton Lyceum in Ouagadougou, where he obtained his Bachelor D certificate in 1986. With this level of education, Georges started his professional career, first at the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at the University of Ouagadougou until 1988, then at the Faculty of Geography and Ecology of the State University of

Kharkov in Ukraine, where in 1994 he obtained (with brilliance) his M.Sc. in Geography and Planning, orientation Nature Conservation and Wise Use of Natural Resources—Wetland Management.

On returning to Burkina Faso he started to work with Fondation NATURAMA in 1995. After a one-year practical period, he held the following positions: Head of Projects (1996–98), Head of Conservation Programme (1998–2003), Director of Biodiversity Conservation (2003–11) and finally Coordinator of IBA Monitoring from September 2011. A passionate birdwatcher, he started his Ph.D. thesis on ornithology in 2003, which he was about to defend if death had not taken him so early.

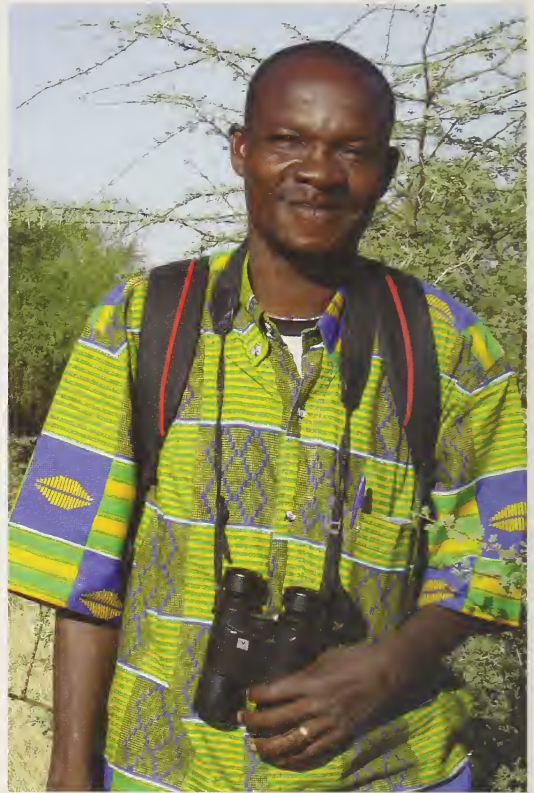
Throughout his tour of duty at NATURAMA, he was dedicated to making a difference for both biodiversity and people. His contribution to nature conservation in Burkina Faso cannot

be over-estimated. Georges was the driving force behind setting up and training local conservation groups at sites like Oursi-Darkoye, Lake Higa and the Sourou Valley, now known as shining examples of community based conservation. Georges combined his ecological expertise with a keen eye for the needs of rural communities. The recent designation of 12 wetlands in Burkina as Ramsar sites was largely achieved by Georges' coordination and training. In the course of this year, the *Field Guide of Birds of Burkina Faso* will be published, a book into which he put so much work.

Georges was the ABC Country Representative and kept records, of which he had a remarkable memory. He was planning to establish a committee and vetting system to compile an official Burkina country list, profiting from the work for the upcoming field guide.

In 2005, NATURAMA engaged in a long-term partnership with VBN (BirdLife in the Netherlands), the start of a close and amicable working relationship. As a keen birder, he was interested in seeing new species during a visit to the Netherlands in February, which coincided with a very cold spell. Undeterred, Georges endured the freezing temperatures, helped by cigarettes and two winter coats, adding a number of northern winter birds to his list. Later, we had a lively exchange with a bird group, who had been sponsoring the work in Oursi (after searching for Black Woodpecker *Dryocopus martius* without luck). Georges had the admirable ability to interact with people, very often with a twinkle of humour in his eyes, but 100% serious in his commitment. Putting the concept of flyway conservation into practice, the success of Georges' and NATURAMA's work in IBAs inspired the project Living on the Edge, comprising similar work at 12 sites in four Sahelian countries and programmes for research, advocacy and awareness-raising, involving VBN and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. Georges leaves an important legacy in his contribution to the present momentum for flyway conservation of migratory birds and their habitats.

Georges was fond of portraying himself as something of a grumpy pessimist, unfailingly



Georges Oueda, Oursi, Burkina Faso, November 2009
(Bernd de Bruijn)

responding to the greeting “Ça va?” with the response “un peu!”. However, one could always tell, from the glimmer of a wry smile and that twinkle, this was an act: in truth, he enjoyed life thoroughly and always made the most of any situation.

Georges was a source of inspiration to many in the BirdLife partnership. He had many plans to continue and expand his work. His passing leaves a large gap, mostly of course for his family, but also in NATURAMA and the BirdLife Partnership as a whole. Our thoughts are with Georges' wife Blanche and his three young children, Mike, Mireille and Gloria. George was an avid birder, a man of the people, with a great sense of humour. He fought a good fight and we will truly miss him.

*Bernd de Bruijn, Danaë Sheehan,
Lincoln Fishpool, Phil Atkinson and Idrissa Zeba*